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Director

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
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Cindy Pitlock, DNP
Administrator

Nevada Children's Commission Child Welfare Committee Meeting Minutes

DATE: Thursday, December 15, 2022

TIME: 12:00 P.M.- Adjournment

VIDEO CONFERENCE:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_NzNhOTA0OWQzMGOzYi00OWFmLTk2OWQZDNiOTc1YWQ2OWE0%40thead.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e4a340e6-b89e-4e68-8eaa-1544d2703980%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22be58909a-421c-4f56-857e-c5f7d4ef6f7f%22%7d

TELECONFERENCE LINE: 1-775-321-6111

CONFERENCE ID: 683 148 447#

1. **Call to Order** – Megan Miller, Tim Burch, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks

The meeting was called to order at 12:05 p.m. by Megan Miller.

2. **Welcome and Introductions (Roll Call)** – DCFS Staff
Members Present by Video: Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks, Tim Burch

Members Absent: N/A

DCFS Staff: Elvira Saldana, Tiffany Coury (contracted consultant)

Public: Amy Honodel, Patrick Barkley, Jennifer Erbes, Brandy Hughes, Tara Donohue

3. **Public Comment and Discussion**

There was no public comment.

4. **For Information:** Welcome and Introduce Community Stakeholders- Megan Miller
Tiffany Coury stated she is in a new contracted consultant role with the Division of Child and Family Services and is supporting the work Dr. Pitlock and Dr. Woodard are doing in youth and children mental health.

Patrick Barkley stated he is the Manager for the Department of Family Services (DFS) at Child Haven Placement.

Jennifer Erbes stated she is the Manager over Resource Development and Support at Family Services in Clark County. It covers all the licensing for regular homes and kinship families, training, and recruitment.

Brandy Hughes stated she is one of the Placement Supervisors with DFS.

Amy Honodel stated she is with the Children's Attorneys Project at Legal Aid of Southern Nevada and is the Strategic Initiatives Manager.

5. For Possible Action: Meeting Minutes from August 5, 2022

Megan Miller asked if there were any changes or corrections to the meeting minutes.

No recommendations were made.

Megan Miller asked if there was a motion to approve the meeting minutes.

Action: A motion by Judge Stephanie Charter was made to approve the minutes, seconded by Shelia Parks, and carried to approve the minutes of August 5, 2022.

6. For Information: Clark County Placements Overview- Clark County Department of Family Services Placement Team representative

- Provide an overview of current resources, goals, and challenges in locating, recruiting, and retaining placements in Clark County.

Megan Miller stated at the last full Commission meeting Brigid Duffy requested the committee tackle all various placement issues they are experiencing. Patrick Barkley, Jennifer Erbes, and Brandy Hughes have been asked to give a lay of the land of placement right now in Clark County. Some of the issues Brigid Duffy brought up were trying to develop information on how many beds they have, what kinds of beds are missing, how many kids there are without a bed, what the barriers are, and what resources are still needed.

Jennifer Erbes stated regarding licensed foster homes and the number of beds, placement and licensing work together. When there are kids on campus or children in hospitals who need placement, they try to do reverse matching to some of their families who are coming up into licensing. They have about 40 open beds. As of November 30th, they have licensed 150 homes this year. They have done a lot of work ensuring the homes they had and are licensed, are resources for them and for the children needing placements. One hundred ninety homes were closed this year. There is a need for infant homes. Thirty-five infant homes were lost at the beginning of this year and the end of last year due to vaccination requirement changes in the administrative code. An initiative they are doing is, an expedited infants training class for families starting in January.

Megan Miller asked if there is a way to track where the needs are in terms of placement.

Brandy Hughes stated the greater need is sibling groups who have different age groups and infants. There is also need for youth with mental health needs.

Tim Burch stated for teens/adolescent children diagnosed with severe emotional distress who need to receive higher level of care placements, contract providers have had the same struggle with maintaining foster parents as they have had. As of January 1st, the state providers have stated they will not take new placements unless they are paid more. They are actively seeking support from the state to create the funding opportunity. Last year they opened an interim care facility for children with initial developmental disabilities. On the West Charleston campus there is a group home project for teen girls which will transition into a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) and will open in January. They have funded homes with St. Jude's Ranch for Children which will be geared for frequent young women runaways who have mental health issues, to provide prevention services. The provider who will be doing the QRTP project has been contracted by the state of Nevada to open 2 Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) buildings on the West Charleston campus. As they roll into the spring, they will have more beds available for those high need teens. They hope the Interim Finance Committee and DCFS were successful in getting the request through today to create some supplemental payment options for vendors. As they roll through the legislative session, they will work together to talk about rate setting for the whole state.

Jennifer Erbes stated the QRTP is one of the ways they are trying to add to their community resources. They know it has to have some legislative changes that they have been working on in regard to their licensing standards and some of those will hopefully occur in the upcoming legislative session to open up some options with the QRTPs which could be available in the community.

Tim Burch stated an additional request was made to the state for one shot ARPA funds for Clark County specific to recruitment activities for foster parents. They also have a great partnership with OneSeven Media.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated she is curious to know how many inpatient treatment facilities specific to substance addiction for teens there are in Clark County. They are lacking facilities in Washoe County. Quest House, the inpatient treatment facility for boys, is now closed. A facility for girls was opened however, right before the pandemic it closed. Judge Paige Dollinger asked Ryan Gustafson about the other PRTF facility in addition to PRTF Enterprise.

Ryan Gustafson stated it is PRTF North which was formerly the Adolescent Treatment Center. The bed amounts are significantly smaller. PRTF Enterprise has historically been licensed for 20 beds. They have 3 children there now with only one home open and a cap of 5. PRTF North is licensed for 16. Ryan Gustafson believes they have 6 kids due to staffing issues.

Judge Paige Dollinger asked what is going on in Clark County in that regard.

Patrick Barkley stated they do not have much. All the inpatient programs have a small variance they do on it. The only one they have is Ignite which is like a group home setting. There is not much for teens in Clark County. They make it a component of the mental health treatment. There is not anything specific.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated with the transition of Governor Lombardo, they can continue to bend the new Governor's ear regarding the important issues for all the jurisdictions in the state, try to get some funding, and impress upon him how critical and important it is. Nevada is lacking in general.

Megan Miller asked what the method is, if there is one, for tracking where the gaps are.

Tim Burch stated the hard part of it is a point in time, any point as to what the gap is. To provide a rolling count they need the information inside UNITY. Their entire recruitment to licensing to placement pipeline is not fully accounted for inside of UNITY. It is something they have reflected to DCFS. They are grateful for them taking the work packet forward and getting the multi-million-dollar UNITY replacement project scheduled. To give a monthly, quarterly, or annual gap analysis it would be a manual reflection process to gather the data. If the committee would like to request it, they would certainly comply.

Megan Miller stated it sounds like there is a solution technologically to start to track.

Tim Burch stated Clark County's commitment will be to have a seat on the executive project committee for UNITY replacement. They will talk to county IT and will engage their own consultancy to make sure they properly map all their gaps and needs. This recruitment to licensing to placement pipeline for foster parents will be something they will request to be inside whatever solution is brought to bear because it impacts so much.

Megan Miller stated it is helpful information. Megan Miller asked if there is anything that would be helpful from anyone present or Ryan to talk about the up North perspective the committee can take back to the full Commission about what gaps there are, any barriers or ideas how to overcome those.

Ryan Gustafson stated they have 2 specialized foster beds that are vacant, and they are very specific about who they can take. Their emergency shelter, which is licensed for 30, has 28 kids. They have 2 other emergency homes which take 10 kids, and they have 10 kids in it. They have a big shortage of treatment level beds. They get a lot of denials for kids. They have no acute pediatric psychiatric services and programs for adjudicated sex offenders in Washoe County. Their emergency care has mostly treatment level or residential treatment level kids. The other huge gap is they have no programs in the North who will take kids who are dually diagnosed with behavioral health and developmental special needs.

Judge Stephanie Charter asked if the situation is unique to Nevada or is it occurring across the country.

Ryan Gustafson stated it is not unique to Nevada. Nevada is one of the lowest paying Medicaid in the country. Foster care and specialized foster care are also low paying.

Tim Burch stated he has had the pleasure to meet with other state level and regional level Directors at national conferences recently and they are having the same exact problems, losing foster parents through the pandemic. The juvenile justice reform is an issue where one system did reform however, no one invested money in the other systems to help prop them up. Other states have made significant investments and created carve outs. To Ryan Gustafson's point, Nevada exacerbates their own issues internally by not making those investments.

Patrick Barkley stated they are opposite of what Ryan Gustafson said, they have acute services. They do not have step down follow-up services in their community. Due to the kids getting so difficult since they are not getting proper treatment, a lot of the foster homes are disrupting from the higher level of care homes and becoming more unstable. Their shelter is full of children who have very high needs. They are running into a lot of issues not only with large sibling groups but with all the various needs of the children within the sibling groups. The rates need to be increased. There are a lot of issues which need to be addressed and it is about resources. It will take more funding to get the resources where they need to be. The shelter is a microcosm of showing what the issues are within the community. They are finding a lot of the barriers are due to a lack of resources and they need to have people who are not trained to avoid the more challenging children. DFS is becoming the safety net. They will have to do something in big ways to make this so that they can get these kids the appropriate resources and help these families, so they stop utilizing them as a safety net.

Judge Paige Dollinger asked how they can get Nevada Medicaid to pay more, if it is a function of the legislature. Judge Paige Dollinger stated it would be helpful to have someone attend the committee meeting. It is evident how emergent the situation is across the state. In the Department of Justice (DOJ) report it is evident the state is failing and struggling in this area. Maybe some assistance can be obtained from the Feds in that regard and perhaps there is a way to have a Liaison from the DOJ assist. The committee can echo these things at the full Commission meeting however, they need to bring in other folks that have the resources that can help them.

Megan Miller stated Judge Paige Dollinger asked a good question and she does not know the answer. Megan Miller asked who is controlling the Nevada Medicaid rate and who is the entity they need to loop in to say they need someone from that entity to help.

Ryan Gustafson stated it would probably tie into the Medicaid Administrator, however more importantly Richard Whitley, the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services. Medicaid has a mandate to do a rate study with a minimum of every 4 years which they are in the process. It is a money issue and an ease of access issue. Legislative action can make changes to the rates.

Tim Burch stated Richard Whitley would be the person the Commission would want to talk to. There are a couple of public workshops coming up. One of the workshops is on the general community side about state Medicaid. DCFS is looking at some things, however they are not part of their departmental budget, they are still embargoed and part of the Governor's budget build process. There is consideration for certain parts of rates to be examined going through the session.

7. **For Possible Action:** Workplan Committee Goals – Megan Miller, Tim Burch, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks
- Develop implementation plan to fill training gaps identified and prioritized by the Commission.
 - Develop implementation plan to fill gaps identified and prioritized by the Commission as well as helpful visual representations and reporting of data.
 - Identify any necessary statutory changes.
- Megan Miller asked committee members if there were any questions or if there was anything they would like to address.

Tim Burch stated as a stakeholder and member of the committee, if they could have a regular report back from the Administrator of Human Services at the state level, to which all the systems report, to keep them updated. At the Clark County level, they have had several commitments from the state over the years and where they find themselves as child welfare operating at a \$49 million deficit. County taxpayers are picking up the bill which does not include recent projects they have stood up on the children's mental health side which is a state function. The state is the children's mental health authority and provider of the service. A continual update to the committee would be helpful to continue to keep this on the forefront.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated she will commit to try to find someone to talk to at the civil division of the DOJ to see if someone can be looped in for the state.

8. **For Possible Action:** Discuss and Decide Upon Next Steps – Megan Miller, Tim Burch, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks
- Assign Tasks to Committee Members (if needed)
Tasks were not assigned.
 - Specify Agenda Items for the Next Meeting
Agenda items were not identified.
 - Confirm Next Meeting Date/Time
The next meeting date was not confirmed.

9. **Public Comment and Discussion**

Jennifer Erbes thanked the committee for inviting them to give them an opportunity and a platform to understand the different situations they are in and some of the barriers.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated regarding agenda item #7 and some of the LGBTQ and implicit bias training talked about in the August meeting, Judge Paige Dollinger had an opportunity to talk with Kimberly Papillon.

Megan Miller requested Judge Paige Dollinger send her the information to pass it along to the committee members and then loop in the larger Commission as well.

10. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 12:59 p.m.